

Proposed Wilson Peak Land Exchange
Public comments accepted through January 24, 2014

Questions and Answers about the exchange

Who is proposing this exchange?

The Trust for Public Land, Skyline Ranch Trust, LLC, and Alta Lakes, LLC Land are the exchange proponents. These entities are offering to convey five parcels totaling approximately 681 acres to the Forest Service in exchange for four Federal parcels totaling approximately 303 acres. The proposed exchange is being facilitated by Western Land Group.

Why is the Forest Service considering the exchange proposal?

The private lands being offered meet several Forest Service goals and appear to have public benefits. The exchange will restore legal access to the summit of Wilson Peak via the Rock of Ages Trail; enhance recreational access and reduce the risk of future development to sub-alpine and alpine environments in the Alta Lakes area; and, remove private inholdings within or adjacent to Congressionally-designated wilderness areas or areas that may be proposed for wilderness.

Because Federal funding for land acquisitions by the Forest Service has become very limited, land exchanges are the only viable option for the Forest Service to acquire important inholdings and secure legal access to popular areas on the National Forest.

What is the intended future use of the Federal parcels being conveyed?

Three of the four Federal parcels are adjacent to private lands owned by Skyline Ranch Trust, LLC and Alta Lakes, LLC. These parcels are located east of Highway 145 in the Alta/Upper Turkey Creek area. The fourth Federal parcel is located on Wilson Mesa and is surrounded by private land on three sides.

The Federal parcels would be merged with the adjoining private lands. Public access easements for significant routes across the Federal parcels, such as Boomerang Road and Alta Lakes Road, and the Elk Creek Trail on Wilson Mesa will be held by the Forest Service after the exchange is completed.

What is going to happen to the Alta Townsite?

All of the historic structures still standing at the Alta Townsite are located on private land owned by Alta Lakes, LLC. A very small portion of the Alta Townsite is currently located on one of the Federal exchange parcels. This parcel does not contain any standing structures. The Forest Service and Alta Lakes, LLC believe it would be best to have the historic townsite under a single ownership. Alta Lakes, LLC is working with the Forest Service to develop interpretive signage for the townsite.

When does the Forest Service expect to make a decision?

The Forest Service follows a detailed process for proposed land exchanges. The ultimate question that must be satisfied is whether the exchange is in the public's benefit.

The Forest Service will analyze and disclose the environmental effects of the proposal and any alternatives to it. This includes detailed surveys for rare plants and wildlife, cultural resources, and hazardous materials on all the lands involved. The lands will be appraised for their monetary value as well.

The scoping and comment period is critical to identify issues that need to be addressed in the environmental analysis process.

Under the Forest Service's new regulations implementing NEPA (the National Environmental Policy Act), there will be a pre-decisional objection period after the environmental analysis is completed, but prior to a final decision. We anticipate the draft and final decision notices to be released in late 2014/early 2015.

How can I comment?

The Forest Service will accept comments through January 24, 2014. Comments submitted in the following formats will be accepted: written, facsimile, hand-delivered, and electronic.

Mail comments regarding the Wilson Peak Land Exchange to:

Grand Mesa, Uncompahgre, and Gunnison National Forests
ATTN: Wilson Peak Land Exchange
2250 HWY 50
Delta, CO 81416

Electronic comments must be submitted as an ANSI compatible format (e.g. *.doc, *.txt, *.rtf) or .pdf. Please note in the subject line that the comments are for **Wilson Peak Land Exchange**. If the sender does not receive an automated acknowledgement of the receipt of comments, it is the sender's responsibility to ensure timely receipt by other means. Electronic comments should be sent to: comments-rocky-mountain-gmug@fs.fed.us

Hand delivered written comments will be accepted at the GMUG National Forests, 2250 HWY 50, Delta, Colorado between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, except for Federal holidays. Fax comments to: 970-874-6698.

How do I find additional information on the exchange?

For additional information and updates on this project, please visit our website at:

<http://www.fs.usda.gov/projects/gmug/landmanagement/projects>. Then scroll to the Wilson Peak Land Exchange project.

For additional information on this proposal, please contact Dee A. Closson, Lands/Minerals Staff Officer, at (970) 327-4261 or daclosson@fs.fed.us.